

# ORCA

## Outdoor Recreation and Community Access

A Program of Southeast Alaska Independent Living (SAIL)

## Adaptive Ski/Snowboard Program Volunteer Manual

The ORCA Ski Program is a proud member of the  
**Professional Ski Instructors of America/ PSIA**





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## ***Chapter 1 – Ski Program Overview***

### ***Welcome!***

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with the ORCA (Outdoor Recreation and Community Access) Ski/Snowboard Program! We are excited to welcome you into a winter of fun and inspiration as you help enrich the lives of children and adults through mountain recreation.

#### ***What is ORCA?***

ORCA is a program of SAIL (Southeast Alaska Independent Living) that promotes and provides inclusive recreation and adaptive outdoor pursuits for Southeast Alaskans, of all ages, who experience disabilities.

Among its wide variety of outdoor recreation activities, ORCA's most popular winter activities are ski and snowboard lessons at Eaglecrest. With the support of dedicated volunteers, ORCA participants are able to access mountain snow sports all winter long. The ORCA Adaptive Ski and Snowboard Program provides lessons every weekend from the beginning of January to the end of March.

#### ***What is SAIL?***

Southeast Alaska Independent Living is a non-profit independent living center for seniors and people with disabilities. We provide services, outreach and referrals with offices in Juneau, Sitka, Ketchikan and Haines.

#### ***SAIL's Purpose***

To empower Southeast Alaskans with disabilities by providing and promoting options to live as active, productive, and involved citizens of choice.

# ORCA Program Overview

## Year-Round Programs

**Young Adventure Club** is a group activity for elementary age youth beginning at age 8. We meet regularly during the school year and summer.

**Adventure Club** is group activity that focuses on peer support, team building, and FUN! Middle and high school youth meet twice monthly after school and during the summer.

**Healthy Choices** is an adult group (ages 18 and up) that meets monthly, focusing on benefits and goals of physical fitness and healthy lifestyles. ORCA works with participants on an individual basis to set goals and help participants track those goals. This program stresses the importance of peer support and peer membership.

**JAMHI Fridays** meets twice a month on Fridays for community outings. This group is geared towards consumers and clients of the Juneau Alliance for Mental Health, Inc.

**Course Offerings** ORCA now provides year-round courses for all ages and abilities. Classes vary from independent living skills (cooking, fitness, etc.) to outdoor pursuits (kayaking, hiking, gardening, etc.)

## Summer Activities

Kayaking  
Biking  
Hiking  
Rafting  
Overnight & multi-day adventure trips  
Campouts at local campgrounds, nearby cabins  
Road trips  
Community Events (Concerts, Plays, Festivals, etc.)

## Winter Activities

Adaptive Ski/Snowboard Lessons (January – March)  
Snowshoeing  
Nordic Skiing  
Ice Skating  
Sledding  
Community Events – Caroling, Cooking, Hockey games etc.

## Why Volunteer?

**Empowerment:** In volunteering with ORCA, you are helping to provide Southeast Alaskans with disabilities the same thrill, challenge, and freedom of skiing and snowboarding as you! You and your enthusiasm for cruising down the mountain are an incredible resource for our skiers who want to get out and play in the snow. Your time and commitment offers ORCA skiers and snowboarders the opportunity to fully realize their abilities, as they grow in confidence, independence, balance, and coordination. But most importantly, you simply have the opportunity to teach someone a new way to have fun!

**Friends:** Volunteering with ORCA is a great opportunity to meet new people! Whether fellow volunteers, staff, or ski and snowboard students, ORCA's constantly evolving community is a bottomless source of good fun and good company.

**Benefits:** The ORCA Programs close partnership with Eaglecrest allows for great volunteer benefits! For each day and a half (or 3 half days) of volunteering with ORCA you will receive: **One free Eaglecrest day pass for your personal use on another day or a free Eaglecrest Ski or Snowboard Lesson.** Volunteers are also given a complimentary Eaglecrest all-mountain lift ticket for the day they are volunteering, valid all day.

**Training:** The close partnership between ORCA and Eaglecrest offers volunteers endless training opportunities. Volunteers are welcome to attend weekly instructor training clinics with PSIA (Professional Ski Instructors of America) certified instructors, as well as two exciting PSIA clinics with visiting clinicians, focusing on Adaptive Ski techniques and personal ski-improvement. These clinics are invaluable sources of information, offering volunteers a chance to elevate their own ski or snowboard skills while learning to better provide quality instruction to ORCA Ski/Snowboard Program participants. For those volunteers already PSIA or AASI certified, all of the above clinics and Academies will count towards any PSIA training hours needed to maintain your certification.

**We couldn't do it without you!** ORCA deeply values your time and effort to help our consumers realize their abilities and discover their independence through the fun and challenge of skiing and snowboarding. You are all wonderful. All of us at ORCA extend a sincere thank you for your interest and commitment to making this program great.

# Volunteer Responsibilities & Quick Facts

## Your Responsibility as an ORCA Volunteer:

- Motivating, monitoring, and facilitating socialization.
- Assisting with chairlift loading/unloading, safety concerns, behavioral issues
- Promote the skier responsibility code
- Encouragement with skills, behavior and attitude
- Assist in good judgment on the mountain including: appropriate runs for the skier ability level, weather, time, equipment, and clothing.
- Instruct and encourage the student in whatever ski or snowboard skill they are working on that week.

ORCA matches volunteers with students based on personality, familiarity, comfort, interests, and ski abilities and goals.

## Volunteer & Skier/Snowboarder Meeting and Lunch Spot:

ORCA staff, volunteers, ski and snowboard students gather at the east end of the main cafeteria Eaglecrest lodge. From the main entrance, take an immediate left inside the door up the stairs and you will see us! If you need an elevator, it can be found at the west end of the main floor of the lodge in the locker area. From the main entrance, go straight to the end of the hall, through the locker room and towards the back wall.

## A Day-in-the-Life of an ORCA Ski or Snowboard Volunteer:

At the beginning of each ski day, volunteers are briefed/updated on who they are going to be skiing with; including the skier/boarder's progress from the past lesson, behavioral history, and medical concerns. The skier's preferred or recommended runs (considering weather conditions) are also discussed with ORCA staff at this time.

## Per Season:

- ORCA serves an average of 40-50 skiers per season with around 50% returning regularly.
- The majority of ORCA skiers and snowboarders experience developmental disabilities.
- The ages of ORCA skiers and snowboarders ranges from 4-80 years of age.
- Around 50% of ORCA ski volunteers return annually, many have had other experience working with people with disabilities.

## Staff:

The ORCA staff is here for you! If you have any questions, concerns or suggestions please let one of us know. One of us will always be near the platter lift or in the Eaglecrest Lodge. If an emergency, ask the Eaglecrest Snowsports School window to radio ORCA staff Lindsay Hallvik.

## ***Chapter 2 – Safety Policies and Procedures***

### **Risk Management**

Like any winter recreational pursuit, adaptive skiing and snowboarding presents a variety of risks and dangers for both students and volunteers. In an effort to keep everyone safe and having fun it is important to take a moment to recognize these risks and how to appropriately respond to keep everyone at ORCA in good health and spirits.

Risk management involves identifying and dealing with both external and internal factors.

#### **Examples of External Factors**

- The Environment – *Weather, Clothing, Crowds, Snow conditions*
- The Equipment – *Is it in good condition? Carried properly? Know how to use it?*
- The Rules under which we operate – *Social, Behavioral, Responsibility code, Routine*

#### **Examples of Internal Factors**

- The Instructor/Volunteer – *Attitude, Comfort, Flexibility, Patience, Ability*
- The Student – *Mood, Blood sugar, Ability, Disability, Behavior, Medication*
- How the student and instructor/volunteer recognize the external factors.

## **ORCA Policies and Procedures**

### **Volunteers:**

Absolutely no use of illegal drugs and alcohol, or influence of the same at ANY time you are volunteering for the ORCA Adaptive Ski and Snowboard Program. A violation will lead to a termination as an ORCA volunteer. Depending on the offense, other disciplinary action may be taken.

No smoking at ORCA activities, buildings or facilities, including the Eaglecrest lodge.

Be prepared. Be physically ready, have a good attitude, get plenty of sleep, make sure your equipment is in good working condition, dress appropriately for the weather.

Have knowledge of the terrain so you are able to select appropriate terrain for your student.

Know the snow and weather conditions and how they can affect skiing.

Act professional at all times you are volunteering with ORCA.



Be responsible. If you are unable to make a day you're scheduled to volunteer, please call the ORCA office at 586-0104 as soon as possible. You can also call the main ORCA cell at 321-2704.

Insurance: ORCA *does not* provide medical insurance for our volunteers.

## **Working with Students:**

Ensure students are adequately dressed for the weather conditions, whether that be sun, snow, wind or rain. If the student lacks the proper equipment, let ORCA staff know so they may find appropriate gear for the student. Never take students into adverse weather unprepared.

Be attentive to students comfort levels. Check for signs of coldness in extremities, do not be afraid to ASK them if they are cold. If you are in doubt, bring student inside for a break.

If you do not know the student or are unfamiliar with his or her normal behavior, attitude, personality, disability, or medications please ask ORCA staff to update you on the student's information.

**NEVER give any student medication!!** This includes over-the-counter pain relievers, such as aspirin.

**Do not share your lunch with students!** Due to dietary restrictions, please do not give students any food or money for lunch. If a student does not have a lunch or forgets their money please tell an ORCA staff.

Ask permission before touching your student. There may be moments where it seems natural to physically assist your student with something. To avoid discomfort and harassment allegations please ask your student if it is okay to touch or assist them.

## **Equipment:**

Check all equipment before your lesson. If you have a concern please tell ORCA staff before talking to the rental/repair shop.

- If your student uses a helmet, check that it fits properly.
- Make sure your student has put on their boots properly and that his or her socks or long underwear are not uncomfortably bunched inside the boot.

Know where your student's equipment is at all times! If the student came on the bus, their equipment will be placed on the rack in front of the main ticket window. If you are unfamiliar with your student's skis or snowboard, ask ORCA staff what they look like or help finding them. If your student comes with a parent or care provider, check with them to see where the skis or snowboard are. When heading to lunch, pay attention to where yours and your students skis are placed.

If using equipment or property of ORCA or Eaglecrest, please return to its proper place or let ORCA staff know of its location. This includes ski bras, bi-skis, mono-skis, the slider, outriggers, helmets, bamboo poles, hula hoops, extra clothing, armbands or bibs.

Ask ORCA staff before using *any* adaptive equipment. If assisting an ORCA staff member with a sit-ski, be sure that all tethers are securely attached and that you know how to load/unload and have a thorough understanding of how to use it. When in doubt, ASK!

## **Lessons:**

### *Student Lesson Options:*

- Beginner students: must take a half day lesson; have the option of an afternoon free-ski with a volunteer “ski-buddy”.
- Intermediate and Advanced students: may take a morning lesson with the option of an afternoon free-ski with a volunteer “ski buddy;” or a full day free-ski with a volunteer “ski buddy”.

### *Volunteer Instruction Guidelines:*

DO NOT ever take a student out of the ski area boundary during a lesson.

You must check in with ORCA staff before taking a student on a new chairlift or more difficult terrain.

DO NOT take any students hiking out “The Ridge” (Pitman’s Ridge) without approval from ORCA staff. This is a *very* rare occurrence and can be very dangerous if the student is not prepared.

Keep a constant eye out for potential dangers or hazards. Warn your students if a potential danger is unavoidable such as a snow cat, snowmobile, accident, trees, other skiers, fences or lift towers.

During the lesson, watch for signs of fatigue or cold.

Remind student regularly of the skier responsibility code. Point out signs (“slow,” “ski area boundary,” “closed”). Teach good etiquette in lift line, and wherever else appropriate.

## **Skier Responsibility Code**

- Always stay in control, and be able to stop or avoid other people or objects.
- People ahead of you have the right of way. It is your responsibility to avoid them.
- Do not stop where you obstruct a trail, or are not visible from above.
- Whenever starting downhill or merging into a trail, look uphill and yield to others.
- Always use devices to help prevent runaway equipment.
- Observe all posted signs and warnings. Keep off closed trails and closed areas.
- Prior to using any lift, you must have the knowledge and ability to load, ride and unload.

# Incident Procedures

## What to do if you or your student is involved in an accident:

Get Help: Send one or more people to notify Ski Patrol. Have them report the exact location of the accident so they can tell the lift operator at the bottom of the lift where to send Ski Patrol. If you need to send a second messenger, make sure they tell the lift operator that they are a second messenger.

Protect the accident site: Cross your skis above the accident site. Ask a bystander to stand above the accident and direct ski traffic away.

Protect the injured skier: DO NOT move the injured skier, unless it is absolutely necessary to do so to protect them from further harm. If life threatening, give first aid to the best of your ability. Stop severe bleeding with direct pressure. Treat shock by keeping skier warm and comfortable until Ski Patrol arrives.

Do not discuss the accident with anyone except an ORCA staff member or Ski Patrol: Do not give an opinion, place blame, or admit guilt. State the facts. Never say: “I shouldn’t have” or “I’m sorry”.

Get names of all those involved and active witnesses.

Go with the ski patrol with the injured skier: Be available to offer information of the accident, medical conditions or disabilities.

Tell an ORCA staff: Notify an ORCA staff member of the accident as soon as possible, even if an ORCA ski/snowboard student was not injured in the accident.

Fill out an incident report form: ORCA staff will give you an incident report form to fill out details about the accident. Be sure to report the names and witness statements from the accident. Be accurate and detailed, but succinct in your report.

Follow-up: Follow-up with ORCA staff. It is essential that you know what happened as a result of the incident.

## Chairlift Emergency Evacuation Procedures

If for any reason the chairlift needs to be evacuated, a team of Eaglecrest Ski Patrol, Ski Instructors and staff will form a task force to help each rider to the ground safely.

- Stay calm, stay in the chair, and assure your student that everything will be fine.
- Never attempt to remove yourself or your student from the chair.
- Wait for Ski Patrol. Ski Patrol will talk you through the evacuation procedure
- Never drop handheld out-riggers, ask them to be lowered due to their weight and breakage.

## ***Chapter 3 – Working with People with Disabilities***

### **Disability Overview**

Regardless of background, race, age, sexual orientation, creed or ability everyone wants to be treated with respect. ORCA participants may experience inconveniences that cause them to walk, talk, look, think, or behave differently than you. Like you may have adjusted to varying circumstances in your life, they have learned to adapt and accommodate these differences. A person with a disability is a person first, and should never be defined by their disability. Any reference to a person's disability that is not pertinent to the conversation at hand is discriminatory and inappropriate.

Thank you for treating all of ORCA skiers and snowboarders with the same respect you would treat anyone else!

In order to most effectively offer assistance to ORCA skiers and snowboarders we have compiled the following information to help you best communicate, enable ability, and feel confident and creative in your skills as a ski or snowboard instructor.

### **Language**

Using the correct language is incredibly important to treating ORCA participants with respect. Many people, unknowingly, use negative and demeaning language when referencing a person with a disability. Below are examples that may help you use your words respectfully.

<b>Old Terminology</b>	<b>Politically Correct Terminology</b>
Handicapped	Person with a disability.
Afflicted with/stricken with	Person who has _____.
Victim	Person who has survived _____.
Crippled	Person with a mobility impairment. Person who uses a _____.
Retarded/Retard	Person with a developmental disability.
Lunatic/Nuts/Crazy	Person with a mental illness.
Deaf and Dumb	Person who is deaf and mute.
Normal	Person without a disability.

# Communication

People experiencing disabilities, particularly those with a developmental disability sometimes use unique ways of communicating. At times it may be difficult to understand, as the individual may speak in a way you are not used to, use sign language or use other modes of communicating their needs, which may include specialized communication devices. Below are a few tips to help you communicate clearly and respectfully:

- Speak directly to a person with a disability, even if there is an interpreter present. Explore mutual interests and conversation topics as you would with anyone.
- Talk to someone with a disability just as you would anyone their age. There is no need to avoid common societal expressions like “did you see that movie?” or “let’s take a walk.”
- People who have visual impairments typically use other senses to learn about their environment. However, you may ask them if you they would like you to explain who else is around, or give directions etc.
- Be patient with those who have difficulty speaking. Do not finish sentences or assume you know what they are going to say. If you have trouble understanding, ask them to repeat it. If you still have troubles try pointing to what you think they may be referring to. You may also ask an ORCA staff or care provider nearby to assist you.
- Slow your rate of speech and speak clearly if need be. Never shout or exaggerate your speech. If someone has a hearing impairment make sure they can see your face and use gestures if possible.
- It is okay to say no to a person with a disability, just as you might to anyone else. If they invade your space or you are uncomfortable let them know. In some cases you may need to be repetitive.
- Ask ORCA staff if they can help you with some survival sign language to help you recognize signs like “Toilet,” “I’m hungry,” I’m tired” or “I’m hurt.”
- People with disabilities are not exceptionally special, inspirational, or courageous; they are just people needing and wanting to be accepted, supported, encouraged, praised and loved – just like you.

## Increasing your (and your student’s) Comfort Level

Whether we recognize it or not, we all have disabilities. Some of us have trouble listening, remembering, lifting, planning, are underweight, overweight, or out of shape. Even though we may try to deny or hide it, many of us can’t help but feel a sense of discomfort around people different from ourselves. Its okay if you feel this way, your comfort level will increase with exposure. Just remember that the individuals you are working with are no different from yourself.

# Behavior Management

Most ORCA skiers and snowboarders do not struggle with appropriate behavior. However, due to the wide range in age, disabilities, medications, and personalities of our students, some behavior issues do arise on the mountain. The following are some suggestions for managing these behaviors and helping the student calm down and or re-focus.

- Remember that you are the role model. Do not act in ways you don't want copied.
- Be clear, concrete and concise about your expectations.
- Behavior issues may be an attempt for the student to gain control, allow the student to gain the control they seek (within reason) by giving them choices.
- Behavior issues may also be an attempt to gain your attention. Do not dote on them; treat the student just as you would anyone else.
- Remember that ultimately the student is responsible for his/her behavior. Remind the student of this and discuss the effect of their behavior. Have the student identify the problems with their behavior and brainstorm ways they could do it differently.
- Give encouragement, but do not patronize.
- Be consistent.

# Medications

Some ORCA skiers and snowboarders take a variety of medications that can have a wide-range of side-effects that you should know about. After you are matched with your student, make sure you are familiar with what, if any; medications they are taking that may affect their performance. ORCA Staff and care providers can offer additional information they can offer on the student's response to the medication.

Don't feel that you need to memorize the medical history of your student, but it is important to be familiar with exceptional reactions your student may have to medications, that could in turn have a strong effect on your student's ability to ski or snowboard.

Medication schedules are VERY IMPORTANT to be aware of. Students may be on strict schedules that need to be followed closely. The failure to take medication on schedule could mean a trip to the hospital for some students. Ask the student their medication schedule before you head outside to ski/snowboard. If they don't know ask a care provider or ORCA staff.

Always be attentive to your student's condition or any medical concerns that may arise. Sometimes something as simple as being aware of fatigue, or change in attitude can indicate anatomical changes, such as blood sugar levels etc.

## ***Chapter 4 – Teaching***

### **American Teaching System (ATS)**

The American Teaching System (ATS) is a framework that provides you as an instructor with professional direction on how to teach skiing or snowboarding to your students. This model is based on a combination of learning and teaching theories and offers guidelines to help you plan and present instruction clearly and effectively.

#### **Philosophy of ATS:**

*Student-centered teaching* – The student is the focus of the lesson.

*Outcome-based education* – Establish goals and teach towards them.

*Experiential learning* – Students learn by doing

*Guest service-driven* – Our students are guests, we want them to come back!

*Teach from the heart* – Show your students that you care.

#### **Offering a “Safe and Fun learning Environment”:**

*Safety* – Use common sense and be aware of your surroundings.

*Fun* – Share what you love with you students!

*Learning Environment* – Make it simple and make it welcoming, be prepared.

#### **Components of ATS:**

*Introduce the learning segment:* Outline an agenda, establish communication lines with your student, build rapport, and create a fun, supportive learning environment.

*Assess the Student:* Evaluate what the student is bringing to the lesson, including physical, cognitive and social abilities. What other activities is the student involved in? What are the student’s expectations, knowledge, goals, concerns, experiences, and limitations in relation to skiing or snowboarding? Conduct an evaluation of the students disability and if any adaptations are necessary with equipment or otherwise.

*Determine Goals and Objectives:* Based on your student’s past experience and abilities, work with the student to determine what would be a goal to work towards. Use a warm-up run to help with this determination. Always review an old skill on an old hill before introducing new materials.

*Present and Share Information:* Be simple and to the point. Choose appropriate terrain. Remember: “New skill, old hill...Old skill new hill”. Never try to introduce new skills on terrain that the student is not already familiar with. Remember to pace your information, too much can be overwhelming. Teach safety and courtesy in every lesson.

*Guided Practice:* Assist in the student’s advancement by giving an opportunity to gain mileage. Provide positive, constructive feedback. Allow the student time to own the ski hill. Don’t be

oppressive but act as a support line. Guiding practice may sometimes require hands-on assistance, or tethering, but for many skiers and snowboarders it simply means allowing them time to practice on their own.

*Check for Understanding:* Determine the student's level of understanding by observing their performance and directly asking what they understood. Ask open-ended questions and allow time for the student to think and respond.

*Summarize the Learning Segment:* Review the goals, lesson and outcome of the lesson. Always finish on a positive note, this is what the student will remember when they go home. Preview the next lesson and encourage further development!

## Learning Styles

People have different ways of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information. As an instructor your job is to simply recognize that 1.) We all learn via one of the 4 learning styles 2.) Tailoring your lesson to accommodate your students learning style can make or break its effectiveness.

*The four learning style classifications are:*

**Doer:** Tends to be practical and wants to experience a new task rather than hear about it. Doers learn by trial and error.

**Watcher:** Tend to learn visually through demonstrations. They will watch and then try to imitate your actions. If you need to explain without demonstrating, use verbal images.

**Thinker:** Tend to learn by auditory instruction and thrive on clear, concise descriptions. They typically like to know the "why" of the new information or task they are being given. Use metaphors and words where possible. Thinkers need to analyze the situation before trying it. Ask questions to help the thinker further process and verbalize their understanding.

**Feeler:** Tend to learn kinesthetically and process information by how it physically feels. They learn best by active learning sensations. Hands-on assistance (with permission) is most effective for these learners. Try to both show and describe what they should be "feeling." Check to see what the student is feeling when they perform the instructed task.

\* Be aware of your own learning style and make sure not to overuse or project it on your student. Concentrate instead on your student's learning style.



## **Adaptive Techniques**

There are many approaches to adapting ski and snowboarding lessons to students with disabilities, and as you may know, no one approach is more effective than the next because everyone is different. Your lesson should simply take students experience, assessed abilities, fatigue, attitude and personality into account. Some students may respond positively to a suggestion that they hold their arms up as if they were holding a food tray (to keep their arms in good position and weight forward), while others may respond better to a different metaphor, or none at all. In the end, it comes down to using common sense and patience to determine how your student learns, what gets him/her excited and how you can feed off each other's energy to learn and have fun. Be creative and remember you are there to have fun, and so is your student!

## **Adaptive Equipment**

ORCA owns a variety of adaptive ski and snowboard equipment including Bi-skis, Mono-skis, Stand-up Outriggers, Ski-bras, Ski Sliders, Hula Hoops, Bamboo Poles, and Snowboard Support Hoops. If you feel that your student would benefit from the use of this equipment, or you are interested in learning how to teach students using this equipment please talk to ORCA staff and we will be more than willing to assist you. Also, if you already have experience or training with adaptive equipment please let ORCA staff know! We would love to hear about your experiences and know how to best utilize your skills.

## **Eaglecrest Clinics**

ORCA and Eaglecrest have a close partnership that allows for an endless exchange of information and trainings. Eaglecrest offers weekly clinics on Friday afternoons (3pm) and Saturday and Sunday mornings (8am) to their Ski and Snowboard Instructors which are open to all ORCA volunteers as well. These clinics work to advance both your tools and techniques as an instructor as well as your own skiing skills.